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SUBJECT: BELGIAN AMBASSADOR ON GHANA AND COTE D'IVOIRE

11. (U) On December 21, Belgium's Ambassador to Ghana (based in Cote d'Ivoire) Dirk Verheyen paid a courtesy call on CDA Brown. He noted that Belgium's Embassy in Ghana was burned down 45 years ago in a local reaction to the murder of Congo's Patrice Lumumba. Belgium has never rebuilt the Embassy and prefers not to draw attention to this event, he said. Belgium has limited interests in Ghana as a non-Francophone country, according to Verheyen, although he expressed keen interest in any information about diamonds in Ghana and concerns about adherence to the Kimberley Process. (He later told PolChief that Belgian businesses in Ghana are involved in dredging, the power sector, road construction, and cocoa processing, adding that rumors of Belgians involved in the diamond business in Ghana are false.)

12. (SBU) More Belgian businessmen are coming to Ghana because of the uncertainties in Cote d'Ivoire, Verheyen told CDA. While he had only been in Abidjan three months, he described the Cote d'Ivoire situation as "terrible" and a potential Liberia in the making. If the Cote d'Ivoire situation does not improve, Belgium may close its Embassy in Abidjan, he added.
BROWN